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## **State Advocacy Committee Honors Non-Profits, Businesses and State Agencies for Assisting Employees with Disabilities**

*Rush University Medical Center of Chicago, Manpower  
and State Agencies Receive Awards*

SPRINGFIELD—May 11, 2011. The Interagency Committee on Employees with Disabilities (ICED) hosted its annual awards event to recognize state agencies, non-profit groups and businesses for their support of employees with disabilities, and for promoting a greater awareness of disability issues. Lt. Gov. Sheila Simon presented the awards and commended the agencies and organizations for helping individuals with disabilities. Nearly 60 people attended the event held at the Illinois Department of Agriculture Auditorium in Springfield.

"The employers and employees we are honoring today promote the inclusion of all individuals, with all ranges of abilities, and help to break down social stigmas and barriers," said Lt. Governor Simon. "They model integration and support for the disabled, a standard we should all strive to meet."

ICED advocates for the rights of state employees with disabilities, recommends ways to strengthen and promote disability-related affirmative action programs in state agencies, and presents workshops on disability-related issues for state agency professionals. Rocco Claps, Co-Chair of ICED and Director of IDHR thanked the organizations and state-agency partners for their continuous efforts to raise awareness about people with disabilities in the workplace.

"I am heartened that our state, and such esteemed organizations and businesses, have made it a priority to ensure working environments accommodate employees with disabilities," said Director Claps. "Our Department, under the leadership of Governor Quinn, strives to protect individuals from discrimination and I'm proud that we have so many partners in this effort."

Speakers at the event included Dr. Robert Kilbury, Director, Division of Rehabilitation Services, DHS; Theresa P. Larkin, Acting Director, IDHS; John Miller, Director, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission and Beverly Huckman, Assoc. VP for Equal Opportunity, Rush University Medical Center, Chicago.

The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) received the "State Agency of the Year Award" for having the highest number of employees with disabilities, with 377 individuals with disabilities out of a total of 2,056 employees.

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The Department promoted seven out of 26 employees with disabilities, hired three student workers with disabilities, developed extensive accommodations to assist individuals with disabilities, trained 232 individuals in disability-related subjects, posted accommodation procedures on its internal website and included this information in new-employee orientation.

Rush University Medical Center, Chicago received the "Non-Profit/Business of the Year Award" for implementing a strong accessibility program within the workplace. Rush created the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Task Force in 1990 and won several awards for its practices to assist disabled staff. The Center has 20 disabled employees and one student with a disability in the Occupational Therapy Master's Program won an award for outstanding contributions to the Medical Center. Rush also received 45 ADA accomplishments in improved access and services, outreach and education; has counseled other hospitals on how to create an ADA Task Force, participates in job fairs to hire candidates referred by DHS, participates in Disability Mentoring Day, hosts seminars designed to break down barriers on how people can be accommodated in nursing and medical professionals, including the first seminar of its kind on a national level. Manpower and Comcast received Non-Profit/Business of the Year certificates as well.

Three individuals with disabilities were honored as well. Timothy Miskell, a DHS employee from the Madden Mental Health Center received the "State Employee of the Year" Award for his dedication to promoting disability awareness to his co-workers and patients and lives the adage "actions speak louder than words." Without prompting, Miskell helps each patient reach his or her goals, gathers and shares patient education materials and eagerly works beyond his job description. Tommy Saunders, another IDHS employee, received an Employee of the Year Certificate as did Brandie Belford from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission.

ICED is a committee composed of the following state agencies and four Governor-appointed state employees with disabilities: Illinois Departments of Human Rights, Human Services, Veterans' Affairs, Central Management Services, and the Civil Service Commission.

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